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CHRISTIANITY A MESSAGE OF PARDON.

THE meaning of Christianity is to be gathered from the Scriptures, in the best use of our minds, and under the guidance of our religious and moral nature. A pious experience, the feeling of an earnest and good heart, must interpret the mysteries that baffle the cold critic. It must be clearly understood, that the gospel deals primarily and specially with sin, with wrong-doing and wrong-doers. Christ does this in an altogether peculiar and striking manner. Christ does not fail to impress it upon the world's heart, that sin is a most sad and formidable reality. He says to every man, "Thou art not right before God or men, or thine own best and highest soul; between thee and Heaven there is a long and dreary and it may be ever-increasing interval, — a great gulf which somehow must be painfully bridged over." Though the holy Christ had uttered no word, his very presence would have roused into life the world's conscience. Purer than the sun in the heavens, he went out amongst men, at once a wonder and a reproach; human enough to show what humanity ought to be. His life was a plea that the world should repent in sackcloth and ashes. Some little shade of sadness must have stolen over even the most hardened, as that bright form passed, as the contrast between Messiah's glory and the common frailty was vividly presented. Even the possessed said, "Art thou come to torment us before our time?" Christ darkens the light in the

face of shallow complacency. He says even to the best, even to those upon whom he looks with love, "One thing thou lackest." He summons into life again dead and forgotten sins; sins regretted once, but never thoroughly repented of. They come home to the soul like the deeds of the day and hour. Hence that tone of sober earnestness which distinguishes a true Christian and a true church; a wholesome experience, in which all believers, however divided in other respects, heartily accord; the opposite of an unchristian indifference, moral flippancy, and ungrounded self-satisfaction. This spiritual and moral soberness achieved, the way is open for the Gospel Messenger.

He comes to answer two great questions: the one relates to the pardon of sin; the other to the way and means of rising above it, or expelling it from our hearts and from society. These inquiries indicate the two directions in which the gospel does its peculiar work, the two directions in which it expends its vast stores of doctrine and motive, its revelations of the world to come, its plainest precepts, and its most profound and spiritual teachings. And we are brought at once to one grand lesson of Christianity, — one distinct and direct answer to the question, "What is the gospel?" It is, we say, a Message of Divine Love, awakening penitence, and assuring the penitent of the Divine forgiveness. It is the assurance, that on the part of God there is no obstacle whatever to reconciliation. It is an authoritative, complete, and final resolution of all the inquiries, doubts, fears, perplexities, curious ceremonial devices, legal fictions, and the like, that have encompassed the subject of the forgiveness of sins. For all the great necessities and purposes of spiritual and moral life, the gospel puts this subject at rest. It neither makes light of it on the one hand, nor does it allow anxiety as to the fact of forgiveness to prey upon the energies of a life which should be given to hopeful effort. It avoids curious explanations, theories of atonement, and deals mainly in facts and assurances; and yet it offers to the soul a definite point of support, a rock higher than we of this earth, upon which to depend. To the wilful sinner it speaks no word of peace, and yet it does not demand perfection before it will administer encouragement. Three points especially deserve attention, — the importance of the Message of Pardon; the Matter of the Message; the Method of realizing the Message in faith and experience.

The Importance of the Message. The gospel does not make light of this subject. How largely it enters into the whole texture of the Christian revelation is obvious to the most hasty reader. And yet there are many who fail to give it a corresponding importance in what would pass for a Christian experience. Not a few say at once, as if there were no room for the slightest doubt, that sins are forgiven. They have meditated a little of God, our heavenly Father; but they have scarcely meditated at all of God, the righteous Judge of all the earth. They speak without much reflection of any kind, and with no deep conviction, of the offence against the Infinite Justice, with which the sinner is to be charged. Now, we must always carefully distinguish between the assurance of this kind which proceeds from a dull conscience and a careless way of treating religion, and that which is based upon a profound Christian experience, a thorough realization of the gospel-promise. Let a man feel his unworthiness, and he is not so easily satisfied that a just God can forgive him. Indeed this is a matter which has ever been fruitful in perplexities. The feeling that some kind of atonement must be made to outraged justice, sustained, if it did not originate, the sacrifices of the ancient religions, and gave meaning to the priestly office; and doubtless there is an element of unchanging truth in the sacrificial ceremonies and dogmas of the popular Christianity. There is a Christian experience in this matter, which is not to be put by as morbid. Certainly no one who is not rich in the treasures of the Christian life is entitled to make light of it. To so great a thinker as Martin Luther, a doctrine of justification, which is only another name for the forgiveness of sins, was material enough, reason enough, cause enough, to authorize a rending of the visible church, a new movement in the Christian world. The priests, with their traditions and corruptions, had obscured the truth of the Divine Love; and he was born to reproclaim it, to teach in much simplicity a lesson for the least and the greatest. There is a stage in the spiritual experience of most earnest and believing souls, when the idea of justice assumes a fearful prominence, a time when the stern reproofs of conscience seem only the forebodings of a judgment far more terrible. It is not that we question the Divine Love, that we doubt the infinite compassion of God: it is rather that we cannot be satisfied that the divine order of the universe can

be maintained in its integrity, and yet such offenders and despisers and careless ones as we go unpunished; that this is possible in the very nature of things, and therefore possible with God. It is hard to say what precise amount of real basis and sound reason there may be in this feeling: it is only certain that thus far no human experience has been more general, whether amongst Gentiles, Jews, or Christians.

The Jewish Scriptures contain, indeed, most unqualified assurances of the divine forgiveness; but the Jewish religion provided for sin-offerings; and, when the prophets speak slightly of sacrifices, the idiom of their language forbids us to understand any thing more than the superiority of inward over outward service. The invariable choice of the phrase "reconciliation of man to God," in scriptural references to the forgiveness of sin, seems to indicate that the difficulty lies in our spiritual condition, in our dull and darkened and perverted souls, and must certainly be regarded as very significant. But we need not with our present purpose enter into any of the intricacies of this vexed question; a matter about which Christians, even those commonly esteemed most evangelical, are much at variance. What is chiefly to be dwelt upon is this, that the gospel, without attempting to analyze this feeling, to account for, explain, or in any way philosophize about it, does recognize its existence, does make distinct and full provision for it, does treat it as a subject of importance.

II. And now we come to the second point, — the Matter of the Gospel Message. Christ the Son and representative of God, who was without sin, and therefore free from its confusing, blinding influence; its conqueror, and therefore able to mark the limits of its evil power, gives rest to the unworthy human soul. "Can the heavenly Father forgive sin?" is no longer an open question: the Saviour, Vicegerent of the Father against whom we have sinned, and sent by him upon a most gracious errand into our sinful world, has answered it. He has assured us that it is possible. He has told us through whom it is possible, by whom it shall be heartily believed, and in whom it shall be heartily realized. Allowing, as has been said, the reasonableness of the soul's anxiety, indeed increasing this anxiety by his own appeals to conscience, and by his own exhibition of an elevated standard of purity, — he assures us that through himself we

may have peace. The gospel distinctly implies and directly asserts, that Christ is our only reconciler, — that we owe forgiveness to him; and it at least intimates that there is a close connection between the forgiveness of sin and the Redeemer's cross. Such an intimation is contained in the Master's words, "This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for many for the remission of sins;" words of which he voluntarily made choice. It ensures thus a high appreciation of the gift, and a grateful regard for the Giver, through whom it was conveyed from the Source of all good; the blessed Sufferer, who was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, despising the shame, and not shrinking from the agony, that he might become the author of eternal life unto as many as should believe on him. It gives us for our simple confession, "We are saved through our dying Lord;" a broad statement to which Christians of every name may assent; a statement which indeed stops short of minute detail, but this because it is neither necessary nor possible that we should know as much of what God has done for us, as we would and may know about our own duty. "If," says Bishop Butler, "the Scripture has, as surely it has, left this matter of the satisfaction of Christ mysterious, — left somewhat in it unrevealed, all conjectures about it must be, if not evidently absurd, yet at least uncertain." Christ is the Saviour of all who, in penitence and trust and holy effort, receive the gospel. They may still suffer many natural consequences of former sins; they may still be the subjects of a fatherly discipline: but they shall feel that the great God in heaven is their friend; they shall worship him in joy and love, and not in trembling; they shall be re-assured by the knowledge of his merciful regard, by the voice which says,

"Do as the Heavens have done: forget your evil;
With them forgive yourself."

III. But now comes the question, "How shall this Message be realized in our faith and experience?" It may be thought strange that it should be necessary to make a point of this kind. "How readest thou?" would seem to be the only needful question. But what is plain upon the page of Scripture becomes obscure in human apprehension, and is not clear again until it has been translated into the language of the heart; and we have been assured by this inward oracle, whose are the promises, and who are

gainers by the coming of Christ. It is certain, that even amongst Christians, there has been the greatest perplexity with reference to this subject. For centuries the whole church apparently receded from the Christian to the older views of religion: Christians sought peace and the favor of Heaven through a multitude of ceremonial observances, by mortifications of the body, by pilgrimages, fast-days, offerings at the altars of saints, founding churches and monasteries, by what were called good works. It was against this fatal *renaissance* of Judaism and Paganism that Luther uttered his indignant protest, reproclaiming the grace of God through Christ, and teaching the utter insufficiency of ceremonial works for assuring peace of heart. Strange that many who "swear by" him should have come to insist upon the meritoriousness of the work of believing in definitions and propositions, with as much pertinacity as ever Romanist clung to penance and fast. Strange that so many of his followers would obscure what he so longed to put beyond all doubt or perplexity, and make the safety of a human soul depend upon the nice wording of a sentence.

But the question recurs, "How shall the message be realized?" And we must reply at first negatively — 1. A mere assurance of the Divine love, a mere telling the soul that God forgives sins, is not sufficient to the emergency. Experience shows that this is so. The fearful heart cannot credit the message, cannot accept it as intended to meet its own peculiar case. No matter though you reiterate and reiterate it: there is no ear to hear, no mind to understand, no spirit to respond, nothing for the good word to lay hold upon. We may wonder at this; but, nevertheless, the fact stands. "No man can come unto me, except he be drawn of God." — 2. It is to be noticed, on the other hand, that arguments will not relieve this dreary incredulity, these terrible misgivings; arguments will not make the matter one whit more plain, but will rather obscure it more and more, and for the very simple reason that we have only human relations, necessities, rules, and practices to reason from; and these can be no measures of Divine principles and methods. The law of the forgiveness of sins transcends the sphere of our limited intelligence, and the endless disputations concerning it have for this reason yielded no satisfactory result, and the perplexed heart can hardly wait until some theory of atonement has been generally decided upon.

Christ does not come into the world, like the theologians, reasoning with us about a "plan of salvation." He does not seek to give us peace by one or another scheme of atonement. He does not "reason high of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate." Pious Christians, whose hearts are full of sweet Christian peace, whose souls do indeed rejoice in the Lord, and wait quietly for the fulfilment of his word, sometimes feel bound to argue for and explain the hope that is in them; but for the most part their arguments are not so real as their faith. They have indeed received from Christ an *unspeakable* gift. It was not essential to their peace that they should understand the heavenly dealing, as well as share the benefit thereof. They must not confound the essential experience with the unessential and it may be erroneous theory.

3. And yet again it is to be noted, that satisfaction as to this pressing want is not to be obtained by a merely outward assent and adherence to the gospel as one's religion and dependence, as an authoritative discharge from any further anxiety, a conclusion of the whole matter entirely aside from any faith or feeling on our part. There are too many Christians who simply take up with the gospel in this way, satisfy themselves as to its reasonableness and historical validity, and, calling this faith, try to think that it will ensure the favor of Heaven, by placing them as it were in the right line, by connecting them with the elect family. Very much the same opinion was entertained by the Jews, in their reliance upon their descent from Abraham, as if they had in this a passport into paradise. St. Paul's method with this and all kindred fancies is the conclusive one. Does any reliance of this sort really commend itself by the results, the fruits, and actual experiences of your soul? Have any really earnest, living, open, tender hearts found peace in this way? Does this kind of intellectual and outward faith still your soul's questionings? Does it enable you to feel that your sins are forgiven? Does it shed abroad in your hearts the spirit of adoption, by which we say Our Father, and feel that God is our Father; and that we can receive punishment at his hands, and yet know that we are still his children, and on our way to dwell for ever in his home? It is not enough to say to a troubled heart, "Be not anxious: Christ has made all right; they who believe on him are safe." Presently you find the heart still unsatisfied, and asking

what it is to believe on Christ, and how we are to know that we really believe on him, in love and from the heart.

Thus, then, does the matter stand. The message of pardon is plainly written: it arrests the inquirer's attention, and commends itself to his mind, as the fair, honest, and striking sense of the great words of Scripture. But, as has been seen, a mere reading, or a mere discussion, or a mere assent, will not attach these assurances to us; will not give them to us as realities, or translate them into experiences. And how is this to be reached? We can only answer, It is the result of Christian growth. Peace and quietness are the fruits of an earnest reception of Christianity. No matter how, no matter why, this is one of the blessed effects which the whole influence of the gospel causes. Hearing the gospel does not produce this effect. Accepting the gospel does not produce this effect. But so soon as you enter into its spirit, strive to live it out, take it home to your heart, open your whole soul to the whole power that goes out from Christ, it begins to be clear, and grows clearer and clearer, that forgiveness is possible; you see that it is so; you know that it is so; you no longer argue about it; your doubts vanish; it is as if the mind of Christ were within you, and you saw with his mind's eye; as if the heart of Christ were within you, and you believed with his heart's unhesitating assurance. This is an experience which springs up in the heart simultaneously with the awakening of a genuine Christian life; and, as this life matures, this experience becomes more and more established, is placed more and more beyond the reach of misgivings, becomes an habitual belief. This assurance of the Divine love is eminently and peculiarly Christian; and the more we are Christian in every sense of the word, the more nearly we approach Christ, the more directly and fully his influence is exerted upon us, the stronger becomes this assurance. You may fall to reasoning about the subject; you may try to make the Scripture promises more real by arguing for their fitness and the like, and you will not feel one whit more confident, but, on the contrary, will be the more perplexed; for, as has been said, you have not all the facts in the case to reason from; you are on the earth, and that mystery of the blending of Divine justice and love is garnered in the heavens. This assurance of forgiveness is a new Christian apprehension of the Father's mercy. It is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit.

It is a truth which is to be spiritually discerned ; which can neither be argued into a man, nor argued out of him ; a truth which the eye of the soul must see, just as the eye of the body beholds the sun. Argument is as much out of place in the one case as in the other. He who has had occasion to urge this assurance of Divine mercy upon a doubtful soul has learned how little arguments advance this purpose, and that it can be experienced only where there is a measure of the same spirit that was in Christ ; and that it grows stronger and stronger, as this spirit strengthens, and gives its tone to the mind and heart. It is a religious and moral experience, not a logical inference. It expresses itself, not in dogmas, but in psalms of deliverance. It depends upon the openness and tenderness and wealth of the heart, not upon the clearness of the understanding. The cross, which reminds us at once of our great need of forgiveness, and of the unstinted unfaltering love that supplies our need, does its great work, not through the dry reasonings of theologians about it, but through the affections which it enkindles in the common heart. The Catholic missionary, with the crucifix in his hand, earnestly and eloquently describing the sufferings of the blessed Lord, will win converts a hundred to one before the reasoning Protestant with his "Plan of Salvation." "Her sins, which were many, are forgiven her, because she loved much." Only they who love can safely be forgiven, will not prove undeserving of forgiveness, will persevere to the very end, and will not pervert their sense of the Divine goodness into an excuse for continuing in sin.

A FEW THOUGHTS UPON THE TRANSFIGURATION.

WE are so familiar with the gospel-narratives, that at times we are apt to forget, or to pass by unheeded, the singular beauty and wonderful magnificence of some of the scenes therein recorded, — of which none is more remarkable than the subject of this essay. A cursory survey of this miraculous phenomenon might lead us to reject its acceptance as a grave fact, and to recognize it as an historical inaccuracy, or a mental delusion on

the part of the disciples. But the more it is studied and examined, the more it seems (that is, to our spiritual vision) to form a part of the beautiful mosaic of gospel-history. It is but a single exhibition of that supernatural element which displays itself, here and there, throughout the whole Christian system. That element displayed itself wherever, whenever, and in whatever way, it was most needed. He who reduces Christianity to a purely rationalistic system, and seeks to measure the wonderful ways of Jesus by any analogy in human experience, will find this supernatural scene upon the Mount as one of the first branches to prune away from this historic trunk. But some who accept the supernatural element in Christianity, at the same time reject the transfiguration as conflicting with the laws of their supernatural theory. The facts of Christianity rest, for the most part, upon an historical basis; and the error is in establishing a supernatural *theory*, whereby to measure the facts thus authenticated. But let this pass. To explain the Transfiguration as a natural phenomenon would surround it with a greater amount of improbabilities than could possibly be raised in accepting the event as supernatural. One point of criticism has been raised with reference to this outward, glorified appearance of Jesus. It is said that this would tend to keep alive those sensuous ideas that already existed in the minds of the disciples concerning the nature of Christ's kingdom. Outward brilliancy was what they desired, and hoped for. They were struggling for seats of honor upon the right hand and upon the left of the royal throne. This brilliant display would seem to encourage this hope; and Christ's reign would open thus with external splendor and glory. Yea, his shining robes would seem to kindle the notion afresh concerning those royal vestments, so acceptable to the Jewish mind. But, if all this be a true objection, will it not prove too much? Does it not strike at the root of Christ's whole method of teaching? Will it not lead us to cavil about and reject his parables, most of his illustrations, and his similitudes? Christ clothed some of his profoundest thoughts in that high-wrought, Oriental imagery, that gave them an earthly significance (so says the record) to the mind of the disciples. The kingdom of heaven was represented, at times, as a great feast, a banquet, where all should sit down, and enjoy what seemed to be the luxuries of life.

These illustrations accorded with the feelings and hopes of the Jews concerning the earthly, princely reign of Jesus. And I am not surprised that the disciples did not comprehend the nature of that reign, — which, in all their simplicity and sincerity, they did not; for, even when Jesus was about leaving the earth, his followers earnestly asked, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore to us the kingdom?" Jesus often spoke of a kingdom to be established, and he himself was to rule triumphant. He rode through the streets of Jerusalem, submitting to this ostentation and display. His pathway was covered with the robes of the multitude, and boughs of trees; and, while the air was rent with loud hosannas, and the Saviour was being greeted by waving palms, he said to his disciples, "Tell ye the daughters of Jerusalem, Behold, the king cometh." Nay, more, after he had declared that the "Son of man" should come in his glory, surrounded by the heavenly hosts, and he should sit upon the throne of his glory, he farther adds, — "And I tell you, of a truth, there be some standing here who shall not taste of death until they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." Now, I would ask if Christ's external splendor upon the Mount was not far from being a contradiction, and if it did not harmonize well with Christ's general method of foreshadowing the future manifestations of his spiritual glory. His personal appearance here was in keeping, we contend, with his symbolic method of teaching. The disciples did not, and Christ undoubtedly knew that they would not, at that time, comprehend the true significance of his illustrations. The kingdom was not to be restored then, nor in that way in which the disciples hoped and labored for. But, after the resurrection, when their moral natures had become wholly and divinely illuminated, then they reached the spiritual realities which Christ's illustrations embodied; then they brought out, from beneath the figures and the similitudes of the gospel, the true significance of the Christ and his kingdom. Thus, amid the dark and sombre shades of midnight, before these three disciples, — the enthusiastic Peter, the practical James, and the loving John, — Christ was transfigured, — was arrayed in heavenly glory; giving to the fleshy lenses of these men an external sign of his Messiahship. And it had its effect upon the mind of these disciples. They felt more firmly convinced than before, that Jesus would realize their expectations. Say what we may con-

cerning this singular method which Christ thus pursued in the establishment of his truth, we shall find that this accommodation to many of the prejudices and hopes of the Jews, as well as this absence of a more thorough explanation of his mission, was what kept his followers around him, and was the most effectual way of eventually reaching their hearts and their affections.

Without entering into a critical exposition of the central purpose of this miracle, we will pass on to an examination simply of the second point that has been raised, in attributing all that appears supernatural to a mental delusion in the minds of the disciples, growing out of their pre-existing exultant hopes. We deny that, just previous to this scene, such hopes existed; and that the ground assumed is gratuitous. A fair inference from the facts presented would be an opposite psychological state. Their hopes were drooping, and needed for their revivification such an external phenomenon as this miracle presents.

The ministry of Christ was drawing to a close. The garden, the judgment-hall, and the cross, were a few steps beyond. And, while Jesus thus received words of comfort from these divine messengers, in their "pavilion of clouds," concerning his decease at Jerusalem, and his translation into a more glorified state, this personal acquiescence of the Jewish lawgiver in the progress and completion of the new dispensation, and the recognition, by the anointed prophet, of the fulfilment of the Messianic hope, — all served as a grand event, too, in the lives of the disciples, and bound them more firmly to their Master's cause. But a week previous to this event, Jesus had spoken plainly concerning his ignominious death at Jerusalem. This staggered them in their faith; for, if Jesus was mortal, then must they look farther for the realization of their Messianic hope. Jesus also had recently uttered things, during his course of teaching, that seemed to clash with the declarations of Moses and the prophets. They had said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;" but Christ had said, "Love your enemies." In short, the Redeemer had sounded the trumpet of peace, while the Jewish heart was panting for war. And I do not understand how those minds, fevered with such prejudices and filled with such hopes, after the last solemn declaration that he should go to Jerusalem to be crucified and slain, could have remained with Christ longer, without some such striking manifestation of glory as encircled the Mount. We

may conjecture that they followed Jesus, then, with these depressed spirits; for these antecedent facts, if they prove any thing, would furnish ground for the support of this hypothesis which we are now presenting, rather than the reverse, ingeniously argued by one of the most spiritual theologians of our times. The last tie that bound the disciples to their Master was nearly severed. They were mistaken in their expectations. They were weary of the life they had long been pursuing, and now sighed for their homes upon the lake, — for their lowly occupation with the net and the fishing-boat. Imbued with such feelings, was not the Transfiguration scene singularly adapted to meet their states of mind? Would it not serve to revive their hopes, and rekindle the wasting fires in their hearts? This could not have been a brilliant mental delusion; for the minds of the disciples, as facts show, could not have been predisposed to such a gorgeous development. They might previously have felt doubts concerning the propriety of following Jesus longer. In doing so, they might dishonor Moses and the prophets; but not so now. The cloud had passed away. All doubt was removed; for the great Lawgiver and the Prophet had both appeared, and shown their sympathy with Jesus. They might now follow the Master with confidence and hope. And, to make their way more sure and clear, a voice broke through the midnight stillness, saying, — “This is my beloved Son; hear ye him.” How the holy vision of that night must have lived and been treasured in their memories! These faithful men had now seen the wise man of ancient times, — the great leader under the old dispensation, — the well-beloved of the Jewish race. They had seen, too, Elijah the prophet, God’s anointed. Yea, their eyes were blest upon that solitary hill, when the hum of daily service had ceased, and the busy world had sunk to rest, by the sight of these heavenly witnesses, whose names were sacred treasures upon the pages of Holy Writ. The blessed scenes of that hour were not forgotten. They found their way out upon parchment. They have been read from generation to generation; and fathers, throughout ages yet to come, will repeat to their children, and to their children’s children, the simple and the instructive lesson of that eventful night.

Perhaps the arguments thus presented amount to but little as positive and satisfactory expositions of this singular phenomenon; yet to us they seem more conclusive, to say the least, than those

which reduce the whole miracle to the principles of mere naturalism. No acute mental subtlety has for us drained the supernatural life from this event. It has a solid historic basis as it stands in the records ; and why not accept it, with all its symbolic teachings, without resorting to such theories as do violence to the language of the text, — to the laws of psychology, and even common sense ? The mind, in its healthiest state, is not dissatisfied with the mysterious, that connects itself with the objects of its religious faith. It craves mystery, — lives and breathes in it. And the mind that is ever striving to reduce the superhuman in Christianity to the range of human analytics is only inventing hypotheses that will bear the soul away from the real strength of the Scriptures, which is their supernatural power and life.

J. F. B.

ZWINGLI'S CATHEDRAL AT ZURICH.

AN American traveller in Switzerland, in the year 1848, spent a sabbath in the old city of Zurich. Called by the bells to worship, he went to Zwingli's Cathedral, the very church in which the great Reformer preached, more than three hundred years ago ; and he informs us, that neither the edifice, nor the service performed in it, has been much changed in all this time. There is no ornament, nor show, nor comeliness, — hardly convenience. Church and preacher, and service and people, stand forth in stern, rigid simplicity. Life amidst those mountains does not change. Should Zwingli return to his old church, it might seem strange to him that three centuries and twelve generations have passed over the scene of his labors since he fell on that fatal 5th October, 1531, bearing the banner of his canton, and contending for the faith that was dearer to him than life. No doubt it would please his honest heart to see the walls of his old church as naked as they were in the day when he caused every picture and image of saint or Virgin Mary, or even of the Saviour, to be removed ; and, instead of the altar, a simple pulpit to be erected, from which the holy word might be read to gathered worshippers. Zwingli was a great and good man, a thorough reformer, a

moral hero, a saint, — equally faithful, more clear-sighted and better-tempered than Luther, who has enjoyed a wider renown.

To understand the Reformation, one should go from Rome, — from St. Peter's, — to that old church of Zwingli. Go and look upon the pompous magnificence, upon the imposing array of pictures and images, upon the gorgeous ritual of sights and sounds, upon the multitude of reverend officials, who carry religion upon their backs, to be seen of men; pass through the routine of festivals and holy days, by which the church stoops from its dignity to pander to the ignorance and vulgar tastes of the rabble multitude; and then go to Zurich, and join the children of the Reformation. Go with them to Zwingli's church, and you will enjoy its very nakedness. You will respect its uncompromising simplicity. You will rejoice in its stern, grim protest. The bare stone-wall, the plain unsurpliced minister, the rough music of men who sing to worship God, each and all will seem eloquent in remonstrance against the artistic formalism and sensuous corruption of Rome. That naked plainness and stern simplicity, the absence of beauty and magnificence, has a mighty meaning. Luther was willing to retain something of the show of Romanism: Zwingli would have none of it. He believed that the kingdom of God must be in the soul; and we doubt not that there was more of it in that plain church at Zurich than there was in all the splendid parade of St. Peter's.

And now, taking ecclesiastical history in our hands, we go back to the primitive churches of the first, second, and third centuries; and we find them all like the church at Zurich in stern protest against outward shows and imposing parades. The early Christians at first worshipped in rooms of private houses. As their numbers increased, and they were permitted to hold their services publicly, they erected church edifices; but they adhered to the greatest plainness and simplicity. Rules were made, and orders passed, against the adornment of churches, until the latter part of the third century. Painting and statuary were positively excluded. It was insisted that the followers of him who took upon himself the form of a servant, and had not where to lay his head, should not seek to adorn their churches with outward beauty. Those early Christians had something worse than the Roman hierarchy to excite antagonism in their bosoms. Everywhere in their midst stood the temples of idolatry, covered and

filled with the beauties of art. Harmony of proportion, exquisiteness of finish, pictures, and images, were enlisted to attract the multitude. The early Christians were jealous of all such appliances. They feared an outward show that might lead to forgetfulness of the inner life.

Eusebius, the father of Christian church history, says that heathens were the first to make pictures and images of Christ, Peter, and Paul, whom they looked upon as benefactors of mankind; and that gradually Christians lost their dread of heathenism, and fell into its modes, and called in the arts to make their churches as imposing and attractive as the heathen temples. But, for more than two centuries, all was plain simplicity. Every house of Christian worship, like Zwingli's church, was a protest against show and formalism, a proclamation of the great truth that the kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

From those early times, coming down with the current of events, we pass the era of Zwingli and Luther struggling for the recovery of the primitive simplicity; and about 1650, a century after the great light of the Zurich church had set, we come upon events in England that arrest our attention. In a quiet and retired street of a populous town, there rises a building of singular appearance. It is plainness itself. It has no spire, nor tower, nor turret; no ornamented cornice, no groined arches, no paint within or without. It is a rectangular box, with a steep roof upon it, with windows to admit light, and doors to admit people; and with plain, hard seats, all upon a level, for their poor accommodation. It is a meeting-house for worship. And the services are as remarkable as the house. There is no artistic chant, with pealing tones of organ-melody; no pulpit, no visible altar, no priest robed for liturgical service. A number of people sit upon those plain benches, each one engrossed by the musings of his own heart. They follow an inward light. In silence they hear an unseen teacher. They believe that God accepts a prayerful heart, though no words be uttered by the lips; and, if any one speaks, it is because he believes that the spirit moves him; and, at length, they depart in silence, just as they came.

It was, indeed, a remarkable manifestation. The world has seen few more significant. And would you know out of what it grew? Go, study the history of the Protestant English Church

from the time of Henry VIII., for one hundred years. Consider the absurdity of a church built upon an earthly throne, — the arrogant assumption of an ambitious priesthood, — the costly extravagance of a hierarchy, that was a mill-stone about the necks of the people; observe how spirituality had died out into heartless formalism, and how thoughts and pride of the outward temple of those mediæval cathedrals, and their imposing services, had made men forgetful of souls within them; and you will be at no loss to determine why it was that the Friends built their plain meeting-house, and, in stern simplicity, worshipped God, without a bishop, a priesthood, or a liturgy. Those Quaker meeting-houses, as they were called in derision, and that Quaker primness and silence, all had much meaning. They, too, were a protest. Look at what they protested; and was not the protest in season? They were a proclamation that the kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

All these repeated instances of remonstace, and other instances that might be mentioned, show, as plainly as any thing can, how strong is the inclination to make religion an outside show. A few in every age have striven for simplicity, for the inner life; but the many have insisted upon divesting the lowly Nazarene of his plain attire, and arraying him in gorgeous robes, and the æsthetic graces of prevailing fashion. And now, looking back upon those protests, what shall we say of them? They are worthy of our respect and veneration. What honest Protestant would not go a long pilgrimage to see that church of Zwingli, and worship with those who still live in the old Reformer's remonstrance against the corruptions of Rome? And who of us does not sympathize with George Fox and William Penn in their earnest, and not always very gentle, warfare against the formalism of their day? But, as might be expected, in all those struggles of primitive Christians against heathen ostentation, — of the Reformers against Papal outsideness, — of the Quakers and Puritans against a Reform Church that was not reformed, — there was extreme action. In the heat of honest zeal, they went too far.

Though the Romish Church did array itself in gold and scarlet, and cover its territories with shows of religion, Zwingli need not, and should not, have made his church an incommodious, naked, grim pile of stone, and his service an exercise of intellect and conscience hard and stern, unrelieved by imagination and

affections ; and, though the English Church had indeed become an insufferable imposition, the Quakers, remembering that in this world the soul must have a body to dwell in, should not have rejected all form and outward rites. But it does not become us to sit in judgment upon the errors of Reformers, but for whom we should have received for religion nothing but an empty gilded casket. Look back, and consider the circumstances under which showy formalism has been resisted, and we shall not wonder that true men, in their honest zeal, have been borne into extremes.

Made wiser by this retrospect, let us now turn to the present, and attempt to foretell the future. Have we committed the lesson to heart, that the kingdom of God cometh not with observation ? Have we learned to be content with a religion that quietly makes its home in the heart ? or must there be more protests, before men will accept Jesus and his religion as spirit and life ? Our country was settled chiefly by those who had contended strenuously against showy formalism. Puritans, Quakers, Baptists, Huguenots, and the churches of Christ in this country, have approached nearer to the primitive simplicity in church edifices, modes, and forms, than has been done in any other country. Nowhere else has the truth been so generally accepted, that the kingdom of God is within us. Think of the examples that have been before us. Showy formalism ought never to get a foothold upon this continent.. The memory of the New England pilgrims, of Roger Williams, of Mrs. Hutchinson, of William Penn, should for ever withhold us from making religion an exhibition, a pageant.

But it must be confessed there is a tendency in our midst to show, to forms and ceremonies. Perhaps it is a re-action from the extremes of Protestantism, aided by a very large infusion of Romish and Pusey influences. For some cause, Christians in this country are making great efforts to clothe religion in a more imposing array. Witness the struggle, in all large towns and cities, to erect expensive and showy churches ; in some instances encountering embarrassments that lead to dishonesty, and making the cost of religion so great that the poor can have no part or lot in the matter, except it be to occupy a pauper's seat. Then, in the decoration of churches and in the style of church music, what a change has come over us within the last fifty years ! Some seem to have forgotten that worship is a spiritual exercise ; that

the essence of prayer is in the heart; and they must have their form and book as the Romanist has his beads in hand, while he looks at the movements of the officiating priest. It cannot be denied, the demand is for showy churches, for theatrical music, for imposing forms, by postures and utterances, for æsthetic preaching. Is the kingdom of God, then, coming with observation? Do we, — the children of Puritans and Quakers, — do we, after all, expect to serve God by gratifying our senses of sight and hearing, — by pleasing our imagination and taste? No, not while we remember the simplicity of Jesus Christ, and the struggles of a martyr-host, who have died protesting against ostentatious formalism. But what, then? Shall we do as did Zwingli, worship God within naked stone-walls, with service anti-sensuous and sternly reasonable? or, like the early Quakers, and some of the Puritans, shall we banish comfort, as well as ornament, from our churches? Shall we attempt to take hold of religion, and have it without rites and forms? Let us avoid both extremes. Man has a body and senses, taste and imagination; and, when he goes to church to worship God, he must take them all with him, and it is well that they should not be incommoded. A church should be made comfortable and pleasant; nay, more, it should be in harmony with a pure, simple taste; and so of all religious service. Nothing should jar the spirit, or offend refined sensibility. I should be rejoiced to see our churches devout mementoes of the history of Christ, in painting or statuary; but in all this there is danger, and perhaps the experience of Christendom should make us jealous of all approaches to a religion of show. By all means, let us cherish these great central ideas, that the kingdom is first to come in our hearts; that true worship is in the soul. The church is nothing, the form nothing, words nothing, posture nothing, only as they help to fill the soul with adoration.

What sight more sad than to behold the comfortable citizen bestow his body upon the cushions of his slip, and complacently look around upon an elegant church which he has helped to build, and be gratified with tasteful preaching, and enjoy fine music, and please himself with the thought that he is doing religion, becoming a member of that kingdom which cometh not with observation! Better for him, it would have been, to have met with Zwingli in his naked walls, or with George Fox in his

prim meeting-house, where no influences would have come through sense to lead away the soul, cheated with the charm of show.

When shall we apprehend the nature of religion? — when cease to be deluded with mere husks and shells? When shall we go through the form to the essence, — through the letter to spirit and life, — and take the meaning of that sublime declaration, “The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”?

THE THREE SPINNERS.

THERE was once a woman who lived in a little cottage, and she had three daughters. They were poor, and could hardly get enough, let them do what they would, to keep them from starving; and, as for clothes, their rags would not cover them. They grew taller and stronger every year, and so every year they needed more to eat and more to wear; but they got along no better than before. One morning, as they were shivering in their thin garments, and longing for a full meal which they had wanted so long, they saw an old woman coming towards their hut. It was so strange to see any one coming this way (for they lived in an opening in the midst of a great wood, which they had never travelled through, it was so dark and seemed so endless), that they knew not what to say for astonishment, when she stepped in at the door, and stood looking at them. She was very old to look at; but age did not seem to have weakened her limbs at all, nor to have dimmed her eye-sight, that was as sharp and searching as an eagle's. Her features were stern; but something like a smile could be seen lurking beneath the inflexible lines of her face. She stood a moment, as if waiting to be addressed by the staring family; but, getting no salutation from any one, she turned to the woman, and said, “Daughter, do you not know me?”

“Alas! no,” said the woman; “I have seen no living thing this many a year, but my daughters, and the beasts in the great wood.”

"I am your mother," said the old woman: "you are my child, whom I left here to labor, and to cut a path through the great wood; but I see you have been idle,"—and she frowned,— "and now I have come to live with you and assist you." "O mother!" said the woman, "if you are my mother,—for I never saw her,—we are poor: we can hardly live from one day to another, and how can we support you? We shall all perish." "Fear not, weak child!" said the other; "I am old, but I can work, and so can you. Come, let us go out now, and set your garden in order; for I see it is all grown to weeds, and covered with rubbish." The woman obeyed; for she was afraid to disobey the stern old dame, and her daughters went with her.

The old woman seemed to possess magical power; for, when she touched a weed, though it were ever so large, it instantly withered, and soon a flower or some useful plant was growing in its place; and the flowers were the more numerous. With the help of the people of the hut, she soon brought the neglected garden into order, and made it look quite beautiful. There was such a variety of flowers in it; and the birds, who had been gone away so long, came back, and made the whole place ring with their music. "Now," said the old woman, when they were back in the cottage again, "have you any flax, daughter? These children must be clothed, and they are old enough to spin; so I will set them about it." "I have no wheel, mother; and, if I had, I have no flax; for my last thread was used to hold together these rags we wear. Remember, mother, we are poor."

"Remember, child, you are idle!" cried the old woman angrily; "but I will make you work. No wheel? and no flax? I have some flax, and perhaps I can make some shift for a distaff, if not for a wheel." So saying, she left the hut, and soon returned, bringing with her a great bunch of flax, and a nice wheel. "This is for you," said she to the eldest daughter. "Spin it, and I will show you how to make clothes of it." Again she went out, and brought in another wheel and another bunch of flax. "These are for you, child," said she to the second daughter. And again she went out, and brought in a wheel and a bunch of flax for the youngest child.

"Spin this, children; and do not leave work till you have spun it all," said she, shaking her finger with a menace; "for I punish all idle children." With this she left the room, and

went with her daughter to another part of the valley, to work with her there.

The daughters all began to spin, and they spun well at first; for the stern look and sharp tone of the grandmother had frightened them; and, besides, they wanted new clothes. But soon the eldest one's wheel began to slacken its speed, and her spindle filled up slower. She was tall and handsome, and somewhat proud withal; and her sisters had always been greatly governed by her, which made her still prouder.

"I am tired of this everlasting spinning," said she. "Any one so pretty as I ought to have fine clothes, without working so hard for them. Here, sister," — to the youngest, — "take my flax and spin it, — will you? You can do it better than I, and I will always love you for it." "I will spin it with all my heart," said the youngest; "but what will our grandmother say? She spoke very sternly, and she has been kind to us." "What difference will it make to her," said the eldest, "if it is all spun? and, besides, she is not here now. Do you spin it; and I will go out into the garden, and play with the birds and flowers." So she gave her flax to her sister, and went out into the garden; and there, instead of spinning, she took off her wheel for a hoop, and, using her wheel-boy for a hoop-stick, she raced up and down the garden-walks, driving hoop. And, when she was tired, she sat down on her wheel-frame, and pulled flowers in pieces, and finally fell asleep.

The two sisters went on quietly with their spinning, after she was gone; and, though the younger's bunch of flax was very large, she was not discouraged, but spun briskly, and sung to the music of her wheel. But her other sister now began to be tired too, though she did not say so. She moved her wheel to the door, and looked wistfully at the games of her sister in the garden, but still she kept spinning. At last she said, "Sister, I am tired of being shut up in this little dirty room. I will take my wheel, and go out under the shade of the great tree in the garden, and spin there, where I can see the flowers and hear the birds sing, and enjoy myself in the fresh air. If I must work, I will make it as pleasant as I can." "Remember what our grandmother said," replied the youngest: "I am afraid she will be angry with my sister in the garden there; for she is very strict."

"If I spin my flax," said the other, "what is the odds where I spin it? My grandmother will never care for that."

So she took her wheel, and went out, and left her sister alone in the hut.

This youngest daughter was not so pretty as her sisters. She was brown and plain-featured; but she had an expression of goodness in her face, that the others lacked; and now, as she spun busily at her great pile of flax, she seemed to grow more beautiful.

In a little while, her sister, who was spinning in the garden, came in with a good part of her unspun flax in her hand.

"It seems to me," said she, "that my bunch was the biggest of the three; and I have brought some of it in to you, that we may be even." "But I have our sister's to spin now," said the youngest.

"The more fool you for taking it," said the other. "Let the idle girl spin her own flax, and do you help me with mine."

So the young sister took her flax, thinking it was better per-haps to work than to be idle; and the other went out to her wheel again. But she did not spin long before she felt weary of it; and she began to chase butterflies, and pick the flowers in the garden. Then her sister woke up, and soon they began to quarrel about some little matter; and, before they could get pacified, they had broken each other's spinning-wheels.

All this time the youngest child had been spinning busily; and though she felt sad to think how much she had to do, yet she kept up a cheerful heart; for she said, "If I spin well, the keen-eyed old grandmother will smile on me, and I shall have new clothes; and perhaps she will take me through the great wood, so that I can see what is in it, and also what there is beyond it." Then she forgot her sorrow, and spun as gaily as ever.

By and by, the grandmother came back to the cottage: then came a sad time for the two idlers. In vain they pleaded that they were tired, — that their sister was spinning their flax; and the oldest was even so foolish as to make her beauty an excuse for her idleness. "You shall be punished!" said the old dame: "no excuse will serve; you have been wilfully idle; and, as for your beauty, foolish girl! you have it not."

Then, taking them to the room where their sister was at work, she let them see to their surprise, that all their beauty had gone

from them to their homely sister, whose face — now as she drew her last thread — looked like the face of an angel.

"You," said she to the two older sisters, "shall live in misery and rags, till you have spun double your appointed portion on this;" and she gave them a mean distaff.

"And you, dear child, shall go through the great wood with me."

Reader! if we call the woman of the cottage, Nature; her mother, Necessity; and the three children, the race of men, we may learn at least this from the story, — Never to take off our spinning-wheels for playthings. F.

THE SHEPHERD'S SUNDAY SONG.

FROM THE GERMAN OF UHLAND.

THIS is the day of God!
But one more morning bell to hear
And then a silence far and near,
And I alone on the plain so broad.

I pray on bended knee,
Oh, mystic breathing! blissful awe!
As if a host ne'er mortal saw
Were kneeling at prayer with me.

The heaven, far away
And near, broad, clear, and holy,
Seems as 'twere opening slowly:
This is God's holiday! F.

GOD'S CARE IN OUR DISCIPLINE.

A SERMON BY REV. F. D. HUNTINGTON.

PREACHED SEPT. 19, 1832.

PSALM CXXXIX. 5: "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me."

AN intelligent persuasion of the presence of God, as it is undoubtedly the most comprehensive single fact in the religious consciousness, is also the primary object held in view throughout the religious education of our race. So manifold and practical are the inferences involved in that one conviction, — that God is for ever near, and so simple is the process of deduction by which those inferences unroll themselves; so clear is it, for example, that, if we truly believe "God besets us behind and before," we must also admit the implied truths of his infinitude, his almightiness, his mercy, and his judgment, till the vast duties also, correlative with those truths, repentance, obedience, trust, gratitude, and supplication, loom distinctly out on our sky, overarching us with their spiritual splendor, and enveloping us in an atmosphere of responsibility, — that, in fact, it would seem as if the work of conversion were done, when you have once lodged that rudimental faith in the heart.

A surprising contrast obtains between the efficiency of this conviction in one man and in another, according to the vividness given it by an habitual recurrence of the mind to it, in connection with the common experience of life. The intimate correspondence that is kept up, as you know, between thought and feeling, or attention to a thing and realization of it, makes the energy of our religious belief depend on the frequency with which we bring it into play. Commanders honor their favorite officers by assigning to them exposed posts in the field, and showing them at salient points of the action. It would be strange, indeed, if our faith in the divine Justice made any considerable figure among our characteristics, or advanced to any signal rank, so long as we keep it hanging obscurely on the outskirts of our daily encounter with the world. The way to promote it is to fetch it into the engagement. So much so that it seems as if men did not so much differ from one another, as being more and less skeptical, or more and less believing, as in being more and less apt to put what they

see and what they believe together. With some persons you have known, the familiar objects of sight and handling seem to be symbols of moral ideas; all the furniture of being has become an apparatus of spiritual expression; the very tools of a handicraft, a language of instruction; the news of the day's events, sensible preaching; and creation, an organ sounding with anthems of infinite varieties of praise. Biblical precepts, with such persons, take new enforcements from way-side incidents. Voices out of eternity have gone into brief strokes that measure off our little periods of time; and, because the outward eye is open, the God who hides himself in mystery has his image reflected in the lights and clouds of our planet's weather, besets them behind and before in the storms and serenities of its shallow air. I say this *seems* so; and therefore it is so; for, in the region of moral impression, it is philosophically accurate to say things are what they appear. Our Father does not tantalize us with mockeries of evidence. Faith is the *substance* of things hoped for. Such persons, in the vitalities of their religious confidence, do occupy another world than their sensual companions. The morning calls them into a nobler heritage; for they look out on a God-inhabited universe. Mountains, that are walls of a remorseless prison to the atheist, are friendly arms of comfort to them; their clothing, pictures of a divine beauty; and their upheaved pillars, treasures whence help cometh from the Lord, who is round about his people. Follow the steps back by which they have come to this assurance, and you will see that it has been by no mere belief lying inoperative in the corners of the brain, for that the worldling had as well; but by familiarizing the facts that faith revealed; by bidding attention memorialize the heart, habit discipline the imagination, and use enliven the emotions; in short, by making their practice a counterpart of God's dealing, and, even as he besets us behind and before, by looking reverently out fore and after, for his tokens.

We cannot look for them in too many directions, nor too often. No line of causes, no group of phenomena, no order of occurrences, is too common-place to stand forth as a minister of the divine Nearness. Any array of these that may bring human thought and the eternal laws into closer contact, or put our spirits and God's into a more familiar intercourse, is an honored instrument in that great apostleship. When I call up, for distinct

contemplation, the scene that has been presented to the eye of the sun during the summer now just closing, on the surface of this single country, it looks all vital with witnesses to the truth of the text, — a spectacle informed with the visible intentions of Providence, and most expressive of that mutual relation of creature and Creator, declared in the psalmist's awe-struck cry, "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me."

Suppose yourself lifted up a little, not indeed to the supernal height from which the tenant of another world might be supposed to look down on our motions, but to some watch-tower, exalted enough to command the features of the continent, a silence above the chatter of the marching multitudes, a calm above their passions; what would the scene be? Saying nothing of the ordinary activities of enterprise, and the accustomed mixture of tragical ingredients in so large a caldron of national and private life, you would see the land astir with travel, its hills covered with migrating bands moving from city to country, and from country back to city; its territory laced over with the thronged thoroughfares, where thousands hasten, ceaseless as the hours, crossing and recrossing each other's tracks in the mazes of this continental dance; valleys resounding with the gayety of recreating toil and the laughter of prosperity, or with the steps of sober yet easier-breathing disease, growing elastic with the vigor of old woods; its sea-shores belted and paced by long regiments of careless sentinels, watching the sea, itself scarcely more changeful than the ebb and flow of coming and retiring crowds; and its lakes and rivers, spotted everywhere with barges of animated freights. In the first glimpse of this wide theatre, where it is impossible to pick out of the confusion the tangled traces of private aims, all seems to be one mass of objectless and unmeaning excitement. But if you could lengthen your gaze, and only ascend a little towards that altitude of intelligence whence God looks down on men, would not all presently begin to resolve itself into a circle of sublime and simple discipline; through the apparent disorder, running a clear, supreme design; over all these noisy paths, presiding a few plain retributive laws; and, amidst all the hurrying host from side to side, a present, directing, controlling God, shaping his ineffable result, pursuing his blessed purpose, moulding his wonderful Future; besetting behind and before every single life there, and laying his hand on every separate head?

The disclosure supposed is but a faint likeness of the reality. If to any of us it seems imaginary, it is only because so many of our moods are skeptical, and more prompt to snatch a pleasure than to confess an obligation. We grow obedient only to that rule of spiritual blindness I have stated; having neglected to look for God's presence so long, that we fail to behold him where he appears. Let me follow the combined guidance of the text and the season, therefore, into a threefold representation of God's intimacy and attendance with the soul.

I. He besets us, first, with helps, laying a demand on gratitude. • There are some sins so charged with shame, that nature has doubled her precautions at the threshold of them, appending the disgrace of meanness to the ugliness of guilt; and of these unthankfulness is one. But, with characteristic pity, the Father, who would not that one immortal light should be quenched, has multiplied the motives against that offence in proportion to its infamy. No sign of his fatherhood is more affecting than the absolute persistency with which his mercy makes it unnatural for man to be forgetful of him. What climax of benignity more complete than this, that the heavenly gifts should be so constant that their very frequency should become the proverbial occasion of their going unnoticed? And what perverseness of ingratitude more consummate than this, that the greatness of a gift should provoke indifference to it? Not "behind" only, or with dark calamities urging us up by force, but from "before" also, and far oftener, by animating attractions, does God "beset" us.

Take with you the fact of utter dependence, which makes every possession, from the body's breath up to the mind's loftiest thought and the heart's dearest friendship, a gratuity, and then go into an estimate of the divine benefactions. How vivid and literal the representation that they *beset* you! It would seem as if God had constructed the whole scheme of our history with reference to this single problem, — how to crowd into our lot the greatest possible number of occasions for mercy. Turn as you will, a mercy meets you. If you move forward on the plane of a customary welfare, mercies are your home-scenery. If crosses stretch their arms across the way, they are never more than enough for a sober foreground to contrast the infinite field of mercies encircling them. If you purpose well, God's spirit

inspired the resolve; and if ill, before temptation has conquered, some pleading proof of divine compassion throws itself, like an angel, on your path, to hold you back; or, if you have yielded, then it is mercy still, in another shape, that calls after you, and, fulfilling the gracious office Paul states so well, "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." Looking into yourself, a weak and weary soul confesses its upholder; abroad, the world becomes a whispering-gallery, echoing one name; into the heavens, a face, never averted, answers your own; into the gospel, all its lessons have one text, "God so loved the world that he gave his Son." When David had exclaimed, "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life," the resolve that followed instantly was, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever;" by which I understand him to affirm that nothing should break his near communion with the God that thus "besets him behind and before."

I said God meant these mercies to be lessons to our virtue. That is their spiritual office. It is for character's sake that he besets us with them, — to make our recoil from impurity more energetic, and our righteousness more complete. It is not that he looks complacently on any mere beastly or babyish happiness in us. For its own sake, no large soul ever cares much for comfort: to be larger, and ever larger, and holier still, is its greater hunger. Happiness is nothing but the favoring atmosphere of the soul, where the Maker intends some fruits of charity to ripen. Mercy is but a minister to perfection. Whenever that, its appointed function, fails, and we abuse it for a selfish or slothful enjoyment, it must alternate with some sterner, sadder discipline.

Take the illustration already put before you. If any of you have returned from travels, bringing no better hearts than you took out, no deeper self-dedication to duty, no earnest desire to make your renewed strength the servant of a holier will, — then must you not be haunted by a certain guilty and cowardly sense of having taken without gratitude, and been faithlessly merry? Invigorated health, — what is it for, but a braver conflict with evil? Preservation from the accidents of floods and the miasma of fields, — what does it point to, but a heartier devotion of the life so saved to the highest ends of life? Visions of beauty, — why were they unveiled from a thousand alcoves, but to make a

selfish traffic and a corrupt temper more hateful by contrast? Why did all the rural spaces open hospitable arms, but to breathe a fresher purity into every family's house? That very perfection of mechanical skill; the scientific wonder of so many contrivances of motion; civilizing roads; bonds of common feeling; humanizing intermixtures; nationalizing post-routes; time-keeping engine wheels; exact arrivals and departures, — these are all but so many limbs and levers in a grand providential mechanism for the better discipline of our public and private life. What they ask is a Christian reflection, a moral mastery, a religious gratitude. If we are not better men and women for them, we are worse; accelerated in bad courses, holding in our hands the implements of a more gigantic mischief, the warrant of a sadder social decline. They set before us the tremendous problem of keeping science subordinate to conscience, — of so consecrating the forces invention has called into being, that they shall not work our estrangement from God. Every righteous day's work is an accepted contribution to the right deciding of that question of our welfare.

II. In the second place, God besets us with restraints and discomfitures. Not that these, too, are not mercies: they are mercies of another countenance, harder to be recognized as such, but rewarding patience by richer blessings. We ought not to place them in opposition to the *helps* just mentioned; for in proportion as we gain deeper knowledge, and view things from nearer God's centre, we find these are only a new form of spiritual helpers, and challenging our gratitude as much as any. So that, since a fresh grief is a fresh sign that God still thinks us worth purifying and saving, a real believer is allowed to construe even an affliction into an encouragement, and feel stimulated when he is bereaved. But, in their first effects, troubles wear an aspect so different from comforts, that mortal shortsightedness cannot help calling them by a different name. The alternation of sharper discipline must come. "Behind," now, in terror and grief and violence, God besets us. But it is the same God. For chastening, the laying on of his hand is; by painful limitations of all our human watchfulness and strength, he makes himself felt to be near. Beyond doubt, did our own waywardness offer no resistance to his laws, making this altered compassion necessary, the wisdom of his love would appoint over us

none but gentle educators. As it is, folly must be met by sorrow, and its discipline must act through general laws, — of health, safety, and life. General, and yet particular: for while the processes of nature are uniform, requiring disorder as a consequence of causes whose nature is to produce disorder; sickness, of lawless living; accident, of careless moving, as pain of a bruise, or burning of fire; yet no thoughtful sufferer will fail to see also that the personal effect is designed for his personal correction; nor do I believe it possible for any mourner, rightly humbled by his loss, and standing in a wholesome posture of the soul before the Almighty, ever to affirm that his anguish is greater than his unworthiness deserved; because holiness, like its Fountain, is infinite, and no man has enough of it for merit to claim any thing by. And so, when some subtle tendency to an unhealthy moral habit is forming within you, God applies some moral medicine. But he administers it often through your outward organization; some stricken member weeping, and all the members weeping with it. If self-will or irreligion is creeping in, and enfeebling the sober sanctity of your household Christianity, grief presently comes in to restore a purer condition, and often cannot complete the cure of faith, without bearing an inmate away. What image can the Father show us of his concern, more endearing than this, — bending down over the scene of every private agony, or frightful public disaster, tenderly, entreatingly, reluctantly, — *so* besetting us, and laying his hand upon us? There is a passage, full of meaning, in one of the prophets, where, in pictures of God's loving-kindnesses, he is represented as "afflicted in all the afflictions of his people;" a glimpse into his personal sympathizing, truer to fact, I suspect, than any of our poor speculations on his impassibleness. The power of the divine *drawing near* in Christ, the endearment of the incarnation, lies much in this sad pity with which the Redeemer looks on the necessity of our retributive sufferings, — a necessity created by ourselves. That he should enter into this dark lot of our humanity, bearing its burdens without partaking in its sins, so as finally to lift us above it, is the unspeakable depth of his reconciling ministry.

You will not understand me as implying, that the individual sufferers by one of those horrible catastrophes that have made our summer so memorable, — disasters that have three times caused

the whole joyous travelling season to hold its breath with fear; dark spots of smoke, and wild confusion, and dying tortures, standing out on the bright scene around them; sharp shrieks of sudden agony breaking the wide peace, and to us, beholding from a distance, making the general security more signal; — you will not suppose I imply, that the individuals overwhelmed in these destructions are to be held personally accountable, or that they encountered a direct retribution there, or that the occurrences can be styled, in the usual sense, providential. Whatever interested courts and a weak judiciary may do, the jury of public opinion has not rendered too strict a verdict against the few responsible agents of a solemn trust, whose habitual contempt of all right, and defiance of all nature, have now convicted them as criminals. Those passengers only participated in this wrong, who perished in the water for want of the simple personal preservatives which the shops of every port supply, and which no one, undertaking the risks of a water-passage, is at moral liberty to leave behind him: they did participate in it. But what I am here concerned to maintain is, that there also God did prove his immediate, immanent presence; revealing himself to the nation; admonishing the people; using the wicked recklessness of a few owners and officers to rebuke the wickedness of the many. It is more than the boldest materialist will dare to deny, that there are grasping, hurrying, self-seeking traits among us, needing so terrible a check. It is more than the most confident national boaster can pretend, that our impassioned blood does not deserve a probe; more than the cunningest defender of the times can show, that precisely these forms of reproof were not the best adapted to our depravity. Yes, here again, God besets us behind and before, and lays his merciful hand upon us. You will not expect him, departing from all his methods, to single out the guiltiest men, and, by some strange, anomalous collecting of them, blast them alone. Social offences are doomed to social penalties. See to it, that in your personal renewal, by a sobered self-control, by a crucified love of gain, and by subduing the lusts of the flesh to the rule of the Spirit, you receive your share in the warning, and return your portion of the mended practice it commands.

Thus, to simple gratitude for evident favor, must be added reverence for the mercy that is veiled in judgments. We are to fear

the God that limits and restrains and punishes, as well as to love the same God when he takes us out and in in safety. The true interpretation of Bible and Providence together brings us to acknowledge, with equal submission, the God that besets us in shelter and exposure; the hand laying on us encouragement or a cross. It is this union of thankfulness and awe that composes a Christian faith.

III. There is another class of divine visitations, — those where the Spirit besets us with precepts. Helps and restraints, joys and griefs, still leave a need of positive instructions. And therefore, running through all the web of our human experience, we find continual disclosures of what God would have us do. In one infinite voice, issuing from Nazareth and resounding through the world, he has informed us how he wishes us to live. But echoes and applications of that sublime command, he has strewed along all our familiar walk. Every item in that experience is a preceptor. Our positions in society are school-forms, where we are set down to study. Our business is a tuition; our use of our eyes, a pupilage. Each ended day is enjoined to lay up some piece of religious wisdom for the next.

Fidelity is the corresponding obligation. We are taught, that we may execute; scholars, that we may learn to be actors; hearers of the heavenly word, that we may be doers of it. Avenging laws impend over our heads. Faithless, we must be scourged. Every so-called accident is an argument for thorough work in the least thing. The mechanic that left a flaw in the steam-box of the "Reindeer;" the helmsman that tried to gain ten minutes by running across the "Atlantic's" bows; the engine-master that heated the planks of the "Henry Clay," — God forgive their souls, but make them examples of warning, also, to every laborer, at every task! So framed together is our social system, that our acts run out into one another's safety, bind our fortunes in one bundle, and reach into infinite and everlasting results. Down on every workman looks a reckoning Lord. The muscles of every arm are charged with the common hopes and reliances of the race. Into all the strokes of hammer or pen shoot the majestic impulses of free-will. If we are ever to get dominion over nature, it is by obeying her God. And that we may obey him more perfectly, how does he beset us by his practical, re-affirmed commandments!

Gratitude, submission, fidelity; God impelling, restraining, instructing us:—the threefold impression of the season; the threefold doctrine of the text. To perfect us personally, you and me, in these graces, God lays his hand on us personally, on you and on me. What he is asking of us this hour is, that the summer be not so ended, and the harvest past, that we be not saved. There are vile souls that have gone up and down the land, tasting greedily at this great festival of beauty, snatching a selfish rest, returning now to apply their recruited energy only to a more besotted servitude to mammon, or to a looser abandonment to fashion. What shall it profit them in the night when their souls shall be required? There are those that have laid in larger stocks of hope for humanity; cheerful confidence in truth; principles of uprightness not to be swayed by an opportunity; a charity thirsting more keenly to bless the wretched; a piety more anxious for unbroken fellowship with Jesus Christ. Of which company are we?

A part of my theme reminds me, there are others passed over from the short journey they had planned for business or a pastime, into the longer one whereby God has led them into immortality. But an aspiring life, wherever it is finished, can have no other than a noble finishing. You all know how a personal knowledge of some one victim of a distressing misfortune renders the whole scene vivid, and quickens the sympathies; and some of you will remember a young man, whose ardent nature and impatient wish to be serving in his spiritual office, even before its ceremonial vows were laid upon him, used, not long ago, to walk over, on Sundays, from the place of his studies at the neighboring university, to take part in the instruction of our Sunday-school. Receiving, last July, the credentials of an honorable preparation, he became a minister of Christ. He preached few sermons; and two weeks ago this Sunday morning, on the shore of the Hudson, from the bed where the scalded flesh was getting free from his calm spirit, was preached his last and best one. I was not surprised to hear that Augustus Whipple died composedly. Lives that hope most and promise most are often most cheerfully laid down. The same faith that fills the heart with energy and radiance in this life yields a welcoming look to the one that expects us. The best qualified to live are readiest to die; for both lives are one. Trusting amply in God, these contented

souls know how well his infinitude can spare them from any given post; how little peace depends on a body, or joy on old environments of circumstance. They go on, over the mysterious bound, without fear, to meet a friendly God.

Brethren, none but a sound and holy heart is safe to carry anywhere, — from State to State, from day to day, in these short pilgrimages, where so many perils lie, or from world to world. It is for us to let ourselves be so moulded, under the Hand that is laid upon us in discipline now, that we may feel it touch us with a benediction hereafter.

AMONG THE HILLS.

VERMONT, of all the States most rightly named, seems very picturesque to one who knows so little of different scenery as I do. Where I have been, a level acre of land is a rarity; and a road which does not suggest the idea of breaking one's neck, a far greater one. The massive hills, crowned with fine forest-trees, with the fresh green of their rounded sides, varied by the rich color of grain, are very beautiful. And the deep valleys between them, with brooks that seem at times to be rivers; and occasionally a little wild glen, contrasting finely with the peaceful air of the whole, are very pleasant resting-places for the eye and heart. There is such a charm, too, in living (for a little while) four or five miles from the railroad, and half that distance from the post-office; where the nearest neighbor down the road is half-a-mile from you! Leave the old farm-house some bright summer's afternoon, and in "five minutes' walk" you will lose yourself among trees so tall and thick, that you can imagine any distance between yourself and a human dwelling. Scramble down the steep hill they cover, and your "toil of pleasure" shall be rewarded by walking *in* the brook, — if rain is not the fashion, — watching the fishes, and conversing with the birds; or you may "sing psalms" with them, out of a merry heart, as St. James advises.

It is a new pleasure, in this age of books, to go sometimes into a house where there are fewer rivals of the Bible, and it will not seem so strange a thing to read it openly. The holy words sound so differently when they chime in with all the harmony of Nature; the eye, in its quick journey up the "everlasting hills," carries the heart higher yet, so easily; under the cloudless heavens it seems so wonderful a privilege to commune with Him in whose sight *they* are not clean.

T.

CHRIST AND THE SOUL.

THERE standeth a child at his mother's knee,
 And he looketh up to her trustfully :
 Her finger is laid on the Holy Word,
 And her voice is low, for her heart is stirred.
 She telleth her child of the sacred, the true,
 And he drinketh the lesson, as flowers drink dew ;
 Beneath her mild teaching his young soul groweth,
 For his *mother* is all of God he knoweth !

Yet is she only a woman, weak, —
 Scarce skilled in the truth herself would speak :
 Faint may her vision be, scant and dim,
 Of the glory she seeks to unfold for him ;
 Not far in the future may lie an hour
 When he shall arise, in the spirit's power,
 And stand, like Moses, meek, unshod,
 In the living presence of his God !

Yet leave him now at his mother's knee ;
 Let him look to her still, all trustingly :
 That loving look, and that accent mild,
 Are the ways *God* taketh to teach the child ;
 And who shall dare whisper, at such a shrine,
 A word that would make it seem less divine ?
 Let him list to her voice as an angel-tone,
 And the world may, in after-years, thrill to his own !

In as lowly trust, and dependence sweet,
 Sits he, in manhood, at Jesus' feet :
 Chide not his faith, nor disturb his prayer,
 For his only hope of heaven is there ;
 Turn him not back to his own dim soul,
 Where the waters of chaos and darkness roll, —
 It heeds not the Spirit that moves thereon,
 Till the Word is given, and light is born !

Depths in the Infinite there may be,
Heaven hath revealed not, nor man may see;
Yet God in the face of his Christ did shine,
And the life on earth was the life divine!
That image of him which appeared below
Was all of the Father his child may know,
Till the hour when the Word shall anew be given,
Coming in glory, in clouds of heaven!

A. D. T. W.

THE WANTS OF OUR SABBATH SCHOOLS.

THERE are few persons who have been engaged for any length of time as teachers in our sabbath-schools, who have not had the question forced upon their minds, either through their own feelings of personal discouragement, or through the observation of facts too clear and prominent to escape notice, "Are our schools doing all the good they might and ought? Are they the efficient means they should be for training youthful spirits for immortality and heaven? Are they, under God, agencies for the regeneration of souls, for leading young hearts to Christ, as the only sufficient, the divinely appointed, Saviour and Mediator?"

We would yield to none in fully and freely recognizing the good that has been accomplished; in acknowledging, too, the quickening and holy influences that ever re-act on the teacher's own soul, where the duty of instruction is undertaken with any vital feeling of its solemn and deep importance. We feel that much, very much, has been done, — that many have been rescued from lives of vice and ignominy, through the word spoken in season by some friendly voice, or have been deterred from open crime in after-life through the upspringing of some latent seed, sown, perchance, in weakness and discouragement, but which has been eventually blessed to the salvation of the soul. How many hearts, too, have been led to a deeper faith, a purer love, a more spiritual walk and life, through the simple words, spoken from week to week by some faithful teacher, often unconscious how deeply his own spirit was impressing the youthful mind, apparently so thoughtless and unconcerned.

Yet, fully and freely acknowledging the good, we would ask the simple question, Are our schools all that they ought to be? Indulging in no vain dreams of mere Utopian goodness, are they, according to our light and opportunity, fulfilling their appointed end?

Personally connected with a school, whose well-earned reputation places it among the first of our denomination, which bears on its undying records the names and impress of spirits which belong not to any one church or place, but which are truly to be numbered as "fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God," we yet feel, from several years of experience and from direct personal observation, that there are vital defects among us which must be remedied, wants which must be faithfully met, ere they become the agencies they should be in the moral regeneration of the individual soul and of the world.

And, among these defects, we would first speak of the want of a true and living spirit of earnestness on the part of many teachers, — of an entire, whole-souled, hearty consecration to their work. Too much is there among us of the spirit of ease and self-indulgence, and mere religious feeling; too little of that deep love of our work which would lead us to count all things as nought, so that we might win souls to Christ. If the teacher enter upon his office simply as a matter of course, because he is anxious to follow others, or merely to pass a sabbath-hour agreeably, among five or six well-behaved, well-dressed children, making little or no preparation for his duties beforehand, and deeming those duties fulfilled when the appointed lesson is well recited, though but a portion of the time allotted to such recitations be thus occupied, — what ought we to expect? what is the necessary and real result? As we sow, so shall we reap. Indifference, or a superficial goodness, or a faith merely founded upon the intellect, and having no deep, abiding root in the soul, must be the natural consequences of such teaching. Where a teacher undertakes his responsible office, virtually expressing, in so doing, his faith in Christ as his one guide and example, and his desire so to follow his life of benevolence and self-sacrifice, as to be the means of leading young hearts to choose him as their only teacher and guide, — of bringing back the lost and wandering to look to him as their only-sufficient Saviour and Redeemer, — and yet is unwilling to take under his charge any but the well-

dressed children of the more favored classes among us, — is there not some vital defect in his spirit, which, if he has any true self-knowledge, ought to deter him from taking such an office? Can he possess that love of souls which can alone render his teaching available?

We know well the discouragements attending the charge of a class of the more ignorant and neglected children among us; but we know, too, the happiness and the good resulting from such intercourse; and we cannot but feel, that, in most instances where no good has been effected, the want of success is to be attributed in part to the teacher, as well as to adverse home-influences. It is said that one hour's instruction cannot counterbalance the evil of the remainder of the week, — the vice and degradation to which many are constantly exposed. True; but with many or most of our teachers, need that one hour be all? By some little self-denial, or a more strenuous exertion, might not those children be followed to their homes during the week, an interest taken in their welfare, and thus the parents be led, perchance, to feel some interest in the objects of the school? We have known instances where a teacher has had children for months under his care, who yet has never seen them in their own homes; never expressed any interest in the long sickness of a parent, brother, or sister; never testified that in any way they were associated with other than the sabbath-hour. And we have known other teachers, who have seen the neglect, undertake the offices of Christian charity to such children, in addition to those under their immediate care; speaking the kindly word of sympathy at home, and creating ties of spiritual love and gratitude, which the nominal teacher in vain could expect to form. And when such have complained of coldness or indifference, or want of success, and have wondered how others possessed the "tact" of interesting such ignorant and uneducated minds, we have sometimes felt that the true cause was sought everywhere but within. The eye of the child is quick and ready to discern; and, unless there be in the teacher a true and heartfelt love, and a spirit of patient, calm perseverance in his work, in vain will it be to address to the young spirit mere words of goodness: he will see through the shallow artifice, and his own languid interest will but reflect the teacher's spirit.

Then, again, with regard to the older and more advanced

classes, we cannot but feel that pupils often become weary of the school, and lose their interest in its exercises, chiefly through the want of faithful intellectual and spiritual preparation on the part of the teacher. In our common schools, the child is conscious, from week to week, of progression, — of finding in his teacher one able to lead him on in his inquiries, to aid him in his progress; and, unless able so to do, he is rightly regarded as unqualified for his work. But how is it in our sabbath-schools? How few are there capable of interesting their pupils after they have attained the age of fourteen or fifteen! How few teachers could pass any thorough examination in the higher branches of religious teaching, — in the evidences of Christianity, the exposition of doctrines, the history of the Christian church, or even of the plain, critical expositions of the Gospels, and the proofs of their genuineness and authenticity!

It may be said that these are but of secondary importance. Secondary, it is true, to a heart-knowledge, but the great means of establishing the heart in the faith and truth of Christ. By virtually saying, as is the case with many teachers, that a reverence for sacred things, a general feeling of the beauty of holiness, and a sort of sentimental piety, is all that is needed, without any real intellectual apprehension of the truth, founded upon close study and inquiry; without any stringent, self-sacrificing, abiding purpose of the soul, — a most grievous wrong is done to the pupil. Our work is a noble, an arduous, a Christ-like work, demanding the highest possible intellectual and spiritual culture in the individual. The teacher stands between the child and the world. By entering voluntarily upon his office, he expresses the desire to lead that child to God, to Christ, and to heaven. Is it, then, to be lightly regarded? Should not the hour passed from sabbath to sabbath in these duties be ever preceded by earnest study, and by spiritual communion with God and with Christ, — not a mere formal act of prayer, but such an earnest, whole-souled, heart-lifting of the whole spirit, that its holy influence shall pervade the manner, reveal itself in the very countenance, and breathe its loving spirit over the whole intercourse of the week?

We repeat, we need more educated teachers, — educated in the highest sense of the word. If, year by year, children are receiving higher means of intellectual culture in our common schools,

so must there be a corresponding growth in the spiritual culture of our Sunday-schools, if we would render them also efficient means of usefulness. Teachers must progress as well as children; there must be a more stringent intellectual force, and a more vital religious feeling, ere we shall see the good accomplished, which the increased number of such institutions among us authorize us to hope and desire. Let us have more of the apostolic zeal and earnestness, more of the life of Christ, in our midst. Let there be more of an entire, earnest self-consecration, and no longer will the waste places of our domestic heathendom mourn; no longer will there be such ignorance and vice as now exists, beneath the very shadow of our churches and our homes; but a new and holier influence will go forth from our midst, and the holy spirit of the Redeemer will be felt as a living, quickening presence, to animate us in duty, and ever to sustain us by his sure promise of aid and blessing from the Father. For to whom is the gift of the Spirit imparted? Not to the worldly, the fashionable, the indifferent, the cold and distant follower of the Redeemer, but to him who hungers and thirsts for righteousness; to him who desires and asks.

But there is another defect to which we would now advert, and which seems to us a most radical and vital one. We refer to the manner in which Christ is presented to the mind of the child. He is taught to look upon this pure and holy being as one whose example he is to imitate, whose teachings he is to obey, whose benevolent and loving life he is to follow in his walk among men, — in a word, as his Teacher and Guide alone; but the idea of Christ as his Saviour, the knowledge of the weakness and sin of his own heart, and of his individual need of regeneration and salvation, and hope of happiness through the mediation of Christ alone, — these are views by many wholly excluded in the religious instruction of the young.

The solemn words of Christ with regard to the resurrection of the evil as well as the good, his representations of the suffering of the impenitent, and of the ruin and loss of the soul, save through humble penitence and a living faith in him, — such instructions as these are too often left in the background; while representations of God's mercy, and of the greatness and dignity of human nature, are regarded as alone sufficient for the regeneration of the soul. But, in such teachings, is not a grievous

wrong done to the mind of the child? Are we not substituting a superficial, sentimental piety, for the brave, whole-souled, hearty consecration of the whole spirit? Were the teacher aware of the doubt and mental trials he is preparing for his pupil in after-years, if he be one of any brightness of intellect, or quickness of moral perceptions, by such partial representations of the truths of the gospel, we believe that, if unaccustomed to mental research or studious inquiry, he would pause and ponder, and consider with earnest thought the truth of his teachings in their whole bearing, ere writing them out in ineffaceable lines on the susceptible heart of childhood.

From early years a member of one of our best sabbath-schools, we would yet gladly save others from the doubt and the trial which the influence of such partial views have had upon our own minds, from the sense of the insufficiency of the past, and the consciousness of inward want and failure, when the soul first awoke to a more vital sense of its need of a Saviour, — of its intimate relation to a divinely appointed Mediator and Redeemer.

And such views we do need to have more strongly set forth in all our schools. A grievous wrong has been done in thus separating the Father from the Son; in regarding Christ simply as an inspired teacher, a holy guide, instead of looking to him as the very manifestation of God, — as the living Saviour, through whom alone we have access to the Father. The child should be led to see the Father in the Son; to learn that we can know God as a personal Deity only through him who declares himself the Resurrection and the Life, — Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God; the only name under heaven, given among men, whereby we can be saved.

We have recently spoken of our religious wants as a denomination;* but where do these wants originate? Must there not be some defect in the early training of the young, both at home and at school, to produce such manifestations in after-life? Would we have our churches aroused from their deadness and indifference, and a more vital, living power at work among us, must not such a spirit be first infused into our schools and in the instructions of home? Must not the young be led to a holier self-consecration; to a deeper sense of the vital importance of religious truth; to a quickening consciousness of the worth of

* In the June number of the Monthly.

the soul, — if we would have them in after-years living pillars of the church of Christ? Must they not be led to accept of Jesus as their Saviour in early youth, if in maturer years the soul would lay its purest offering of consecration and gratitude on the sacred altar of commemoration?

We need among us less of that easy, pleasant, sentimental teaching, that speaks only of the beauty of the flowers, and the glory and happiness of the outward creation, and more of the stringent, earnest, faithful representations of the truths of the gospel, as inculcated by the apostles of old; of the truth as it is in Jesus.

We need to have truths presented honestly and fairly; to have sin of whatever form be called sin in all its native deformity and evil; to have the inevitable suffering and punishment of sin solemnly and faithfully set forth; and the hope of pardon brought home to the soul, as dependent on the free mercy of God revealed in Christ, as the only Saviour of man. We need to have the necessity of the new birth, — of the conversion and regeneration of the soul from sin to holiness, taught as an essential truth of the gospel to every individual, and not to let the abundant goodness and mercy of God be so abused as to leave out of sight his equally divine attributes of holiness and justice; but, through the clear, full representations of these, to have the soul led to him, through Christ, as the Saviour who can redeem it from the power of sin; as the Saviour who gives the assurance of future happiness and eternal life to the regenerate spirit, as indeed the very gift of God.

Let the teacher ask himself, Have I indeed consecrated myself to this work? and is my daily life such as will convince others of the reality of the truths I teach? Do I take the word or Christ for my standard of duty? Have I ever faithfully examined the reasons for the truths I now teach? Have I merely accepted them from others, or are they the result of earnest thought and inquiry, and the diligent, prayerful study of the word of God?

If not, pause, we beseech you, and wrong no longer your own spirit, or the spirits of others, by such superficial teaching. Be more true to your high calling. Be spiritually in earnest. Feel that the well-being of immortal souls depends upon your faithfulness or neglect. And oh! forget not, that through your simple

words of truth, faithfully uttered; through your life of consecration; through your fervent prayers of intercession in their behalf, — you may be the means of saving souls from the power of sin and of death, and of leading them to Christ and to heaven.

And may we not hope that with more of this living spirit among our teachers, with the earnest, faithful inculcation of these great truths of the gospel, a new life may be infused into our midst; that coldness and indifference may be rebuked; and the living spirit of the Saviour himself be felt throughout our schools, and pervading and sanctifying the church of Christ?

God grant that his Holy Spirit may indeed be poured forth and rest upon us, through the Redeemer, until we all become rooted and built up in him, as living branches of the one true vine!

E. M. N.

LETTER.

DEAR FRIENDS, — In my last letter I suggested that injustice was done to those parents who adopted mild and conciliatory ways of securing the ultimate obedience of their children. In this letter I wish to set forth a similar grievance in regard to housekeeping. There are some old and experienced housekeepers who cannot tolerate in others the least slackness or negligence. I say nothing against the importance of thoroughness, neatness, and order. I say nothing against the pleasures of seeing things carefully preserved, and kept from one generation to another. "To have a place for every thing, and every thing in its place;" to be saving and prudent; to have a well-considered system about every thing we do, is all very well; indispensable, indeed, to a *perfect* accomplishment of business. We might, with sincerity, speak with unqualified admiration of these traits in housekeeping; and nothing was ever written or said about them in too high terms of praise. But what we protest against is, that those who are so happy, either by natural endowments, or by a judicious training from childhood, or by both, as to possess these inestimable traits of a good housekeeper, should carp against those who are their superiors in every thing but in the art of housekeeping. One would think that these unfortunate slack housekeepers had cer-

tainly committed the unpardonable sin, to hear these critics sigh and scold about them.

So odious and contemptible, or so pitiable, are these delinquents, in the eyes of their judges, that they might have ever so many redeeming points about them, all to no purpose. The great characteristic, the prominent thing about them, is, that they are wasteful housekeepers. They may possess genius for poetry or philosophy; they may possess the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, said to be of great price in the estimation of God; they may have gifts for teaching and winning the young; they may have health, intelligence, and purity, so that they enjoy almost a heaven below, and yet it is all of no use; — their parlor table is not dusted every morning, and they do not count their silver spoons every night.

Let us see in which family more real, substantial comfort is enjoyed; — in the family where the taste for intellectual and spiritual enjoyment has been formed, and where it is every day gratified, and where hearts are knit together by the ties of tender affection, and where bad housekeeping, either from ignorance or some other cause, is the chief sin, — or in the family where good housekeeping is the chief excellence, and where there has been no love of books cultivated, no good fellowship or refined society promoted, and where there is no particular self-control or spiritual communings.

Of course, we admit that there is no necessary conflict between good housekeeping and cultivated manners; but, seeing that they do not always go together, and seeing that there are families that pride themselves on their superiority as housekeepers, who are undoubtedly deficient in spiritual culture, it is a perfectly fair question to ask, whether they have not left undone things infinitely more important than keeping pots and kettles clean, and never allowing the parlor to be cluttered with baby's playthings. We ask for nothing but simple justice. We offer no apology for negligence in any shape. We pray that all ignorance and all unfaithfulness may be removed. But it is altogether shortsighted and small-hearted for people to despise or to fret about those who are not so nice in their housekeeping as they are. Instead of worrying about the delinquency of others in this respect, they would do much better to look at home, and see how naked and destitute their souls are of resources of enjoyment, as

soon as the house is all cleaned, and the excitement of getting dinner and washing the dishes is all over. It would be better for them to realize how little they have either in their minds or their hearts to make conversation about, except what they never can enjoy in the spirit-land. Speak to such people about the landscape or the flowers; about the politics of our country or the principles of Christian faith; ask them about the last meeting of the scientific, or temperance, or educational convention,—and they exhibit no interest in such intangible subjects. Ask them to visit the exhibition of a common school or of a university, and they tell us their tastes do not lie in that direction; that they never read or reflect; that they never go into the society of learned people. And yet these are the self-constituted judges, whose hearts are pained, and whose lives are shortened, because such and such a family live in so much dirt and confusion. I am reminded of a visit at an asylum for the unfortunate, where one incompos pointed her finger at another, and said, "They are laughing at you, you fool you!" To be sober about it, no misfortunes ought to be sneered at. It is unfortunate not to succeed in housekeeping; it is still more unfortunate to be captious and irritable and intolerant and uneducated. But let us all be friends, and not set up to be judges or critics. Let us all think less of our abilities than of our foibles. Happy is he who has cast the beam out of his own eye, before he undertakes to pick the mote out of his brother's eye.

We are always to take it for granted that other people live as nearly up to what is required of them by an all-wise and all-discerning God, as we do to what is required of us. We have different gifts and different opportunities; and let us always leave it to God alone to decide which family or individual, all things considered, deserves more credit than others. Let us not make ourselves so unhappy about others, when we have so much to do to correct our own faults.

B.

THE STARS.

FROM THE GERMAN OF CLAUDIUS.

FULL often in the middle night,
 When I my work have done,
 And in the house nobody wakes,
 The stars I gaze upon.

They wander, scattered here and there,
 Like lambs upon the plain;
 In clusters, too, and strung along
 As pearls are on a chain.

And all are sparkling far and wide,
 And sparkling pure and fair;
 I look, and cannot look enough,
 At the great glory there.

Then, underneath the heaven's tent,
 Low speaks my heart to me, —
 "There's something better in the world
 Than all its grief and glee."

And on my bed I throw me down,
 And long I lie awake,
 With seeking for it in my thought,
 And yearning for its sake.

F.

PUBLICATIONS.

Kossuth in New England. — John P. Jewett & Co. have issued an octavo volume of 343 pages, including all the important speeches of the eloquent Hungarian, from the time of his arrival in New England till his final departure from the country. This firm seem to understand how to meet the demands of popular feeling. They have here given the public a permanent and handsome record of the oratorical triumphs of the man who is, in some respects, the

most marvellous speaker of the modern ages. The frontispiece is an admirable, engraved, full-length likeness of the orator. It renews one's regret that he did not, while in America, adopt the dress of the people.

Memoir of George Dana Boardman. By Rev. ALONZO KING. Published by Gould & Lincoln. — The great moral and dramatic interest of the life of this devoted missionary to Burmah is here enhanced by an extended introduction from the pen of Rev. W. R. Williams, of New York, whose learning, genius, and piety are brought to adorn a worthy subject.

Romance of American History. — Gould & Lincoln continue this series of instructive and entertaining works for the young, by Rev. JOSEPH BANYARD. The present volume relates to early events connected with the French settlement at Fort Carolina, the Spanish colony at St. Augustine, and the English plantation at Jamestown. We can testify that one boy finds a daily excitement in Mr. Banyard's stories.

Questions on the Gospels. — Crosby, Nichols, & Co. publish a new Sabbath-school Manual under this title, prepared by a teacher whose experience, thoughtfulness, culture, and earnest faith, we know qualify her pre-eminently for this kind of authorship. These Questions take up the contents of the four Gospels, and present them lucidly to the pupil's mind, recommending them at the same time to the heart. There is other valuable information in an Appendix, and a map of Palestine at the beginning.

The Opal. — Under proper supervision by sane and responsible persons, we can conceive the publication of a literary journal by the inmates of a Lunatic Asylum to be an innocent amusement to them, and a means of sustaining the sympathy and respect of the community towards that saddest of all classes of the diseased. We have hitherto commended the "Opal," which comes from the State Asylum at Utica. Owing to some neglect, probably, the September No. is allowed to go forth with pages that not only betray the wildest ravings of delirium, and contain the most absurd nonsense, but are stained with what, save for the pity felt for disordered minds, must be pronounced indecency and profanity.

Dr. Gilman's graceful and touching *Class Poems*, in their rare and exquisite binding, realize the image of "apples of gold in pictures of silver."